Claims

[c1]   We claim:

[c2]   1. A system of using anti-spam points for email processing, comprising:

a) means for providing one or more web addresses, with choice of languages, accessible by email users;

b) means for interacting with said email users through said web addresses to ensure that a real human being is interacting with said system;

c) means for generating unique fingerprint keys for said email users, said fingerprint key is a string of ASCII characters assigned to or chosen by said users;

d) means for issuing a fixed or varied number of one or more types of anti-spam points to said email users, and adding a fixed or varied number of said anti-spam points to said email users' accounts after a fixed or varied period of time has elapsed;

e) means for limiting the number of said anti-spam points said email user could use within a period of time;

f) means for setting a same or different rate limit on the usage of said anti-spam points for each sub-periods of equal or non-equal duration within a period of time;

g) means for monitoring said users' email usage patterns, and making adjustments to the availability of said users' anti-spam points;

h) means for selling said anti-spam points to said email users, and tracking each user's anti-spam points by type and quantity;

i) means for owners of email servers to establish accounts for their servers to earn and redeem said anti-spam points;

j) means for tracking the number of anti-spam points earnings processed by each email server;

k) means for maintaining one or more databases containing registered user profiles;

l) means for receiving one or more encoded or non-encoded strings or fields containing email sender's profile from the email servers, and decoding said strings or fields for comparison with the record in said database or databases;

m) means for comparing the information from said strings or fields with said user's record in said databases;

n) means for sending a message to said email sender requesting registration if said system has determined that said user's profile has not met certain preset criteria;

o) means for acknowledging said email servers to make said email available for downloading if said criteria has

been met or exceeded;

p) means for email recipients to earn anti-spam points by receiving advertiser's emails;

q) means for notifying email servers and email recipients of the anti-spam points they have accumulated, and providing a way for them to redeem their accumulated anti-spam points for money, goods or services;

r) means for limiting the number of registered accounts assigned to each user;

s) means for enabling email users to send emails via one or more provided web pages;

t) means for said email senders to set one or more threshold value or range for an email's available anti-spam points to be charged;

u) means for said email recipients to set one or more threshold value or range for accepting the delivery of an email;

v) means for said email recipients to set one or more threshold value or range for accepting the delivery of one or more type or category of emails;

w) means for domain owners to issue anti-spam points to email users for emails delivered only to within their own domain;

x) means for authenticating said senders, optionally with the use of cryptographic software generated digital signatures.

[c3]   2. The system of claim 1, wherein said recipient's email server in l) and o) can be substituted by said recipient's email client software or a plug-in to any available email client software.

[c4]   3. The system of claim 1, wherein means in a) can be provided as a telephone number or facsimile number for registration.

[c5]   4. The system of claim 1, wherein said amount of anti-spam points is variably issued in accordance with said sender's category and registration process.

[c6]   5. The system of claim 1, wherein said fingerprint key is either revealed to, or concealed from the email recipient.

[c7]   6. The system of claim 1, wherein said databases of email users include a subset or a super set of fields cor-responding to said email users.

[c8]   7. The system of claim 1, wherein said encoded string is plain text, or an output of said required information from any kind of encoding algorithm that is possibly used by one skilled in the art.

[c9]   8. The system of claim 1, wherein said sender's email is held in said recipient's email server, or in said recipient's own storage media as specified by said recipient's email

client.

[c10]   9. The system of claim 1, wherein said email recipients is allowed to redeem their earned anti-spam points for money, goods, or services when said anti-spam points in their accounts have reached a threshold value, or when the monetary value associated with said spam points has reached a threshold value, or when said recipient makes a request for redemption.

[c11]   10. The system of claim 1, wherein the monetary value of the purchase of a number of paid anti-spam points is equivalent to, or different from the monetary value of the redemption of those same numbers of anti-spam points.

[c12]   11. The system of claim 1, wherein any of the means in a) thru x) can be included or excluded in any combination thereof.

[c13]   12. A method for controlling the delivery of email for the system of claim 1, comprising the steps of:
a) recipient's email server receiving an email from a sender, said email including an address field containing said sender's email address, optionally containing said sender's fingerprint key issued by said system, optionally containing the type and number of anti-spam point, and optionally containing said sender's threshold value or

range for paying out anti-spam points;

b) recipient's email server encoding said sender's email address, fingerprint key, threshold value or range for paying out anti-spam points, the type and number of anti-spam points born by said email, said recipient's email address, recipient's threshold value or range for charging paid anti-spam points, or any combination thereof;

c) recipient's email server sending said encoded information to said system for authentication;

d) if said sender's email address is not on record, or said sender's fingerprint key does not match that of said record, or said sender's anti-spam points are insufficient, then said system: i. denying authentication; ii. acknowledging said recipient's email server of denied authentication, and requesting said email server or email client to hold said sender's email for further discretion; iii. sending a registration request to said sender; iv. approving said email if said sender registers within a predetermined period of time; v. deleting said email or adding a flag to said email if said sender fails to register within the predetermined period of time;

e) said system validating authentication and making said email available for downloading, and deducting appropriate quantities and appropriate types of anti-spam points from said sender's record; and adding appropriate

quantities and appropriate types of anti-spam points to recipient's record.

[c14]   13. The method of claim 12, wherein said registration request is issued from the recipient's email server.

[c15]   14. The method of claim 12, wherein step v. is replaced with "adding a flag to said email and/or making said email available to said recipient for deleting, downloading, filtering and/or allowing exploitation of sender's email by said recipient."

[c16]   15. The method of claim 12, wherein said sender elects to omit sending said fingerprint key, and while said system requests for registration, the request provides a link to a web address where said sender inputs his or her fingerprint key.